

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 ORM-01 SR-02

AID-05 PA-01 PRS-01 USIE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00

CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 /053 W
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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4622

COMSCFE YOKOHAMA IMMEDIATE

INFO SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 4088

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF PINT VS

SUBJECT: PIONEER COMMANDER REPORT

REF: YOKOHAMA 010828Z APR

1. WE UNDERSTAND THERE HAVE BEEN PRESS REPORTS REGARDING BEHAVIOR OF ARVN MILITARY ON BOARD PIONEER COMMANDER, WHICH EVACUATED REFUGEES FROM DANANG. THE FOLLOWING MAY BE OF ASSISTANCE TO THE DEPT IN HANDLING POSSIBLE PRESS QUERIES.

2. ACCORDING TO OFFICIAL USG PERSONNEL WHO WERE ON BOARD PIONEER COMMANDER, ON SATURDAY, MARCH 29, A GROUP OF ARMED VIETNAMESE MILITARY, BELIEVED TO BE EITHER RANGERS OR MARINES, EMBARKED WITH OTHER REFUGEES ON AN LCM FROM A BEACH NORTH OF DANANG. AFTER FIRST ATTEMPTING TO BOARD THE TUG OSCEOLA, THE LCM THEN TIED ALONGSIDE THE REFUGEE LADEN BARGES. THE MILITARY WERE ARMED. NO OFFICERS WERE IDENTIFIED DESPITE REPEATED INQUIRIES. AT SOME TIME DURING THIS NIGHT, THESE MILITARY ASSISTED IN LOADING REFUGEES FROM THE LCM INTO THE BARGES.

3. EARLY SUNDAY MORNING, THE PIONEER COMMANDER BEGAN LOADING REFUGEES FROM THE BARGES. THE MILITARY ASSUMED CONTROL OF THE LOAD-
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ING, ALLOWING MEMBERS OF THEIR GROUP TO BOARD FIRST AND THEN

SEARCHING THE BOARDING REFUGEES. THE MILITARY CLAIMED THEY WERE SCREENING VC. THE MILITARY BROUGHT THEIR WEAPONS ABOARD THE PIONEER COMMANDER.

4. AT SEA, THE SEARCHES CONTINUED THROUGHOUT THE NIGHT OF MARCH 30-31 AND THERE CLARLY WAS SOME VIOLENCE. WHILE THE EXACT NUMBER OF PERSONS KILLED OR WOUNDED IS NOT KNOWN; ESTIMATES RANGE FROM TWELVE TO FORTY.

5. THERE WERE NO DIRECT THREATS TO US PERSONNEL AND NONE WERE INJURED OR KILLED. SMALL GROUPS OF MILITARY ATTEMPTED TO COME UP TO THE BRIDGE AREA SEVERAL TIMES, BUT WERE PEACEFULLY DISSUADED BY US PERSONNEL ON THE BRIDGE.

6. US PERSONNEL WHO WERE ABOARD THE FIRST OF TWO TRIPS OF PIONEER CONTENDER FROM DANANG REPORT NO SUCH INCIDENTS.
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